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TS# 185702-b

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

2 January 1964

REVISED MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Probable Reactions to Various Courses of Action
with Respect to North Vietnam

The attached revised edition of our Memo of 30 December 1963 contains no changes of judgment; but, in response to several queries, seeks to elaborate on certain of these earlier judgments: see Paras. 2-e, 3-c, 10, and 11. Please destroy or return your copies of earlier Memo.

4 Jan 64

Mr. McNamara:

This should be substituted for
Tab C of General Kinnel's memo
to you on Covert Actions against NVN.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
OCT 1990

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TS# 185702-b

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

2 January 1964

REVISED MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Probable Reactions to Various Courses of Action
with Respect to North Vietnam

REFERENCE: MACV [REDACTED] Op-Plan No. 34 A-64/[REDACTED]
of 15 December 1963

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1. In response to General Krulak's request, we assess below the probable Communist and international reactions to [REDACTED] specific operations given us from among those of the referenced Op-Plan. With one exception, the given operations are small unit (South Vietnamese) airborne or maritime sabotage efforts against specific targets (bridges, railways, dumps, etc.) in various areas of North Vietnam. The one exception is a three company (plus) raid against a small island just north of the 17th parallel DMZ. All of the [REDACTED] operations are part of general Krulak's Phase I: i.e., to be mounted within about four months' time from the Op-Plan's activation. [REDACTED]

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This memorandum has been prepared with the assistance of
O/CI and DD/P.

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2. In sum, we believe that:

a. Communist reactions to most of these operations would be slight.

b. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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The reactions would be felt primarily in South Vietnam and Laos but would not be so extreme as to change the character of hostilities in those countries.

c. The operations under review would not be likely to lead to appreciably increased Chinese Communist involvement in the area. Neither would these operations [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] lead the Soviets to believe that the US had made a significant change in its policies.

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d. The [REDACTED] operations under review, taken by themselves, and even if all were successful, would not "convince the DRV leadership that their continued direction and support of insurgent activities

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in the RVN (South Vietnam) and Laos should cease" -- this, according to the reference Op-Plan, being their stated goal.

e. It is possible, however, that the North Vietnamese Government might see these operations [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as representing a significant increase in the vigor of US policy, potentially dangerous to them. If so, they would probably wish to halt the new developments at an early date, and would therefore try to arouse international pressure for a conference to settle the problem of Vietnam before it expanded into a more general conflict in the Far East.

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f. In general, such operations as [REDACTED] here considered would probably be viewed with disfavor by most of our major allies. Taipei and Bangkok, of course, would probably support the US strongly. British officials in South Vietnam would probably see these operations' merit and consider them worth trying, but London's reaction -- particularly to any international political complaints engendered -- would be complicated by the UK's position as co-chairman of the Geneva Conference and hence (with the USSR) principal guarantor of the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords, which such operations

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would violate. France would almost certainly be opposed to any US/RVN attempt to carry the war to the North, and would probably cause the US the most difficulty. Canada would probably find it difficult to support the US in any North Vietnamese complaints formally submitted to the ICC. If such operations helped generate a Communist call for an international conference, this call would probably find much support elsewhere in the Free World.

g. The principal determinant of DRV prosecution of the war will not be damage suffered from such small-scale operations, but the course of the war in the South and the degree of risk Hanoi believes will be involved in its prosecution.

3. We assess the various operations below, under their designated Op-Plan categories of I, II, or III. We note, however, that these categories of increased expected damage to the DRV do not necessarily correspond to what we believe to be increased reactions. We believe, in general, that:

a. Those small unit airborne and maritime operations not far north of the 17th parallel [REDACTED] [REDACTED] would probably provoke the least response.

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b. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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c. The sabotage efforts against the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] railroads would probably
provoke little if any overt response at first, but if successfully
continued would probably provoke the Chinese to more threatening
outcries, increased offers of support to the DRV, and attempts to
increase the Chinese presence in North Vietnam and northernmost Laos.

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SPECIFIC RESPONSES BY CATEGORIES

CATEGORY I - HARASSING OPERATIONS

4. General Description. This category includes small, unspectacular demolition operations and small-scale intelligence collection actions, including tactical reconnaissance probes by small military units, temporary interdiction of lines of communication, and general low level harassment. These operations may be launched and effected by land, sea, and/or air.

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5. [REDACTED]

a. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

b. [REDACTED]

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C

[REDACTED]

c. [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

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[REDACTED]

d. [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

C

[REDACTED]

e. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

6. In essence, operations of this category have been taking place since June 1963. Additional such operations will probably evoke reactions similar to those prompted by past operations: e.g., propaganda complaints and spy trials, but little more. We share the view expressed in the Op-Plan's Appendix 6 that Hanoi might

[REDACTED]

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begin preparing a formal protest to the ICC. With the Op-Plan, we think it unlikely that non-Communist nations or the UN would become concerned with operations in this category, and Communist China's reaction would probably remain confined to denunciations of the US and its "puppets."

7. We believe, however, that operations launched from Laos against targets well north of the 17th parallel and/or operations involving the exfiltration of teams through Laotian territory [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are not of the same order as the others in this category. Some such activity is already going on, of course, and if the level and success of present activity are not markedly increased, Hanoi's reaction is not likely to change in any major respect. On the other hand, should Laos-based or Laos-exfiltrating teams begin achieving some substantial success, the Communists would probably attempt strong local reaction and would try to seize -- or, at least, to destroy -- the bases from which such operations were being mounted, using whatever force was necessary. Should this force require additional introduction of North Vietnamese units into Laos, such units would probably be introduced. The chances of a general Communist offensive in Laos would increase, but this is probably not the course the North

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Vietnamese would initially follow. Charges of new US intervention would almost certainly be made, especially if the US made extensive use of helicopters or STOL aircraft for infiltration or resupply. Such charges would probably create additional difficulties for Souvanna Phouma and might prompt certain of our European allies, especially the French, to assert that US actions were jeopardizing the LAOS settlements.

CATEGORY II -- ATTRITIONAL OPERATIONS

8. General description. These include small-scale resistance operations, airborne and seaborne raids by small forces on important military and civil installations, and demolition of important facilities.

9. [REDACTED]

a. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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b. [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED]

C

c. [REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED]

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d. [REDACTED]

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e. [REDACTED]

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f. [REDACTED]

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10. In accord with Appendix 6 of the Op-Plan, we believe successful Category II operations will evoke DRV propaganda and complaints to the ICC; but we do not agree with its judgment that the DRV would be likely to respond by requesting any appreciable increase in Chinese material assistance. Hanoi probably would increase the intensity of Communist activity in Laos, though probably not to the point of launching an all-out offensive. We would not anticipate any major new pressures in the south, since we believe Hanoi and the Viet Cong are already doing all they are capable of doing there without changing the nature of the war. However, the Communists might undertake some specific retaliatory measures: e.g., more intensive attacks upon South Vietnam's rail system, increased terrorism aimed particularly at Americans. etc.

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11. We do not believe, however, that all of the operations in this category would produce similar degrees of Communist reaction.

For example, operations against the [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] railways -- if repeated and successful -- are much more likely to evoke a sharp Communist reaction than operations against objectives in the southern portion of North Vietnam. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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CATEGORY III - PUNITIVE OPERATIONS

12. General description. These are semicovert resistance/sabotage actions designed to damage and/or destroy facilities or installations critical to the economy, industrial development, and internal security of the DRV. These actions include raids by company or battalion size military or paramilitary forces, airborne or seaborne, sabotage by small teams of important targets, and the active organization, recruitment and employment of resistance movements within North Vietnam. Such actions are to be as covert as possible, but the duration of such operations and size of the forces required for their execution may result in their becoming basically overt attacks on the Hanoi regime.

13. [REDACTED]

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14. The probable reaction to Category III operations must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

For some time the Viet Cong have been building their strength in the Rung Sat area along the Saigon River (Saigon's outlet to the sea). As a retaliatory gesture, Hanoi might order the VC to harass shipping coming into Saigon. However, this is something the VC are likely to do anyway, if they acquire the ability. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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15. A successful [REDACTED] attack [REDACTED] [REDACTED] would probably produce a barrage of Hanoi, and Peiping, propaganda. Hanoi might try to launch a retaliatory Viet Cong attack in the south [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The RVN operation might produce some neutralist grumbling and nervousness, but so long as the attacks were launched by RVN forces on the ground at the time of the attack (regardless of how they arrived in the target area), we doubt if there would be any Free World reaction likely to cause the US serious difficulty.

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FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

Sherman Kent

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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